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ABSTRACT

This module provides information on supported employment as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986, P.L. 99-506. It discusses models of supported employment; the roles of vocational rehabilitation counselors, school district personnel, and job coaches; and what school district personnel can do to prepare students for supported employment. Sample job training agreements are included, along with 6 definitions and 12 references. (Author/CML)

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TITLE: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT:

Information is provided on supported employment as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986. Questions are addressed regarding the models of supported employment; the roles of vocational rehabilitation counselors, school district personnel and job coaches; and what school district personnel can do to prepare students for supported employment. Sample job training agreements are included as well.

CE 055 384

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SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Overview

Supported employment is a concept which has been formulated as professionals in the field have explored service options for persons with severe handicaps. Several factors have been the foundation for federal legislation mandating supported employment options for individuals with severe handicaps. The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986, P.L. 99-506, authorized state formula grant programs to provide services to individuals who, because of the severity of their handicapping condition, would not be eligible for traditional vocational rehabilitation services. An outgrowth of research and demonstration projects made it evident that persons with severe disabilities are willing and able to work. As the number of school sponsored community vocational training programs increased, parents and professionals raised their expectations of the work abilities of children with severe disabilities. Thus, parents and professionals envision students with severe handicaps working alongside nonhandicapped workers in a competitive job. Another development that underlies the concept of supported employment is the emphasis on integration. Innovative educational practices advocate for services that provide children with severe disabilities opportunities to learn, work and play alongside peers who do not have handicaps. An extension of this concept for children has prompted the need for the same opportunities for adolescents and adults with severe disabilities.

Definitions/Terminology

Supported Employment	Competitive work in an integrated work setting for individuals who, because of the severity of their handicap, need ongoing support services to perform that work *(Federal Register, 1987).*
Competitive Work	Work that is performed on a full time basis or a part time basis, averaging at least 20 hours per week, and for which an individual is compensated in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act *(Federal Register, 1987)*
Integrated Work Setting	A work site that allows for frequent social interaction with peers who are not disabled nor are paid staff in the work setting. It is a setting where eight or fewer persons

	with disabilities work together in a location not adjacent to another disability program *(Federal Register, 1987).*
Ongoing Support	Continuous or periodic job skill training service provided at least twice monthly at the work site throughout the term of employment to enable the individual to perform the work.
Job Coach/Employment Training Specialist	A staff person who coordinates and manages the various aspects of supported work, including the development of the job in industry, matching an individual to the job, training the individual until industry standards are met, and providing ongoing follow-up support to the individual and the employer.
Supported Employment Service Provider (SESP)	The agency which coordinates and manages a supported employment program. The job coach is hired by the SESP.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What is supported employment?

A. Supported employment is defined in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986 as 'competitive work in an integrated work setting for individuals who, because of their handicap, need ongoing support services to perform that work' *(Federal Register, 1987).*

Q. Who is served by supported employment?

A. Supported employment is intended for persons with severe disabilities who require a range of support services to maintain employment and to live in community settings. These are individuals who have not traditionally been considered for competitive work. The group considered to have severe disabilities includes persons who have moderate, severe, and profound mental retardation, autism, multiple disabilities and chronic mental illness.

Q. What are the models of supported employment?

A. With the Rehabilitation Act Amendment (1986) providing a framework for services to supported workers, four models of employment have been developed to result in valued work outcomes for adults with severe disabilities. These models are:

(1) individual placement model,
(2) enclave model,
(3) mobile crew model, and
(4) benchwork model.

The **individual placement model**, also referred to as the supported jobs model, is characterized by an individual worker working at a community business. Support is provided at the work site by a non-profit community agency supported employment service provider (SESP) staff person who contacts the employer, negotiates the hours and benefits, and provides training and support for the individual on the job site. Permanent and intermittent follow along support is also provided to maintain the successful employment of the supported worker. Support begins as a continuous one-to-one training which is gradually reduced over a period of weeks or months. This model has proven successful with adults with mild and moderate mental retardation.

The second model of supported employment is the **enclave model**. An enclave is a group of not more than eight individuals with disabilities who work with nondisabled workers in a business or industry. This model provides another alternative from competitive and sheltered employment by giving the support needed by the workers, while the benefits of integration and commensurate wages are maintained. This model has been proven effective for workers who experience learning or behavior problems and require continuous supervision and extended training.

The **mobile work crew** is a service option for those individuals who need more supervision than can be provided by an enclave supervisor or whose behavior exceeds the tolerance of the typical host employer. A mobile crew is a group of individuals who work from a van spending its work days performing service jobs in the community. A supported employment service provider sets up a single purpose small business, develops the community work contracts, provides the transportation, equipment and supervision of workers. Janitorial work and groundskeeping have proven to be the mainstay for profitable contractual businesses. Workers of a mobile crew must be flexible to the variety of community settings and work tasks required during

their work week. Workers with moderate, severe and profound levels of mental retardation, sensory limitations, physical handicaps and behavior problems have been successfully employed using this model.

The **benchwork or small business model** is the approach most similar to a sheltered workshop but must be structured differently to meet the size and integration requirements of supported employment. Set up as a small, single purpose, not-for-profit business, companies using the benchwork model procure contractual work or subcontracts to provide paid work for not more than eight individuals with disabilities. With the benchwork model, the selection of the work place site is critical in meeting the integration standards of supported employment. A site near stores and restaurants provides the opportunity for integration during breaks, lunch and before and after work. The benchwork model is designed to meet the needs of individuals who need more supervisory attention and structure than is provided in a work crew but should not be an option for persons with disabilities who require less support.

Q. **How does supported employment differ from traditional time limited adult services?**

A. Traditional rehabilitation services are focused on prevocational preparation with services used to help persons with disabilities enter independent employment. Supported employment is very different in the delivery of services. Rather than seeing a need for readiness preparation for a job, this approach sees instead a need for support while the individual is working *(Bellamy, Rhodes, & Albin, 1986)*. The difference in interpretation has significant programmatic implications. One difference is the length of time certain services are funded by rehabilitation. Traditional post-employment services and funds are generally terminated after 60 days. In Missouri, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation can be involved with supported employment services for a maximum of nine months. Services after that time would be arranged by the supported employment service providers.

Q. **What does 'appropriate on going services' mean?**

A. On going services are those outlined in the Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) which are required by the individual to maintain a satisfactory level of work productivity and performance for paid employment. Examples of on going services include: periodically monitoring employee work performance and employer satisfaction, job training, and retraining as necessary, transportation assistance, and assistance in establishing eligible public assistance.

Q. **What is the client referral process for supported employment in Missouri?**

A. The client referral process for supported employment in Missouri is:

1. The client is referred to the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation by an individual or outside agency.

2. The Vocational Rehabilitation counselor (a) collects existing medical and psychological information pertinent to the client's rehabilitation process, (b) authorizes any additional services that are necessary including an updated general medical assessment, and (c) consults with client's Department of Mental Health case manager or other appropriate resources, if applicable.

3. If the client appears to have supported employment potential and the referral is not made by a SESP which has already included a Supported Employment Assessment, the VR counselor will purchase one.

4. After the supported employment assessment has been received by the VR counselor, the counselor can then evaluate, determine and document whether (a) the client's functioning level is high enough to proceed with traditional competitive VR services, (b) supported employment services appear appropriate, (c) the client's disability is too severe for supported employment but sheltered employment appears appropriate, or (d) the client's disability is "too severe" for any VR services and the case is closed.

5. If supported employment services appear appropriate, a staffing is set up by the VR counselor to include: (a) the VR counselor, (b) the referring agency, (c) the service provider, (d) the client's case manager, (e) the ongoing support provider, and (f) when appropriate, the client, the client's parent(s) or guardian(s). At that time, a group decision is made regarding future services to the client. All parties involved in the initial staffing should provide input into the Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan. *(Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1989).*

Q. **How is supported employment funded?**

A. Cooperative interagency efforts are essential to the success of supported employment initiatives. Through such cooperative efforts, time limited services should be provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and on going follow up or follow along services may be provided through the long term service and financing capabilities of other public and private agencies. Agencies such as local and state departments of mental health and mental retardation, developmental disabilities and social services, as well as private organizations, will

need to take the responsibility for the long term funding of supported employment. These agencies generally have a mandate from their state legislature to provide long term care and treatment services for persons with severe disabilities. In order to accept this responsibility, long term funding agencies must be able to convert existing money from current programs to supported employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. Cooperative funding strategies should utilize these varied resources and include two primary components:

1. The use of vocational rehabilitation's financial resources for time limited services to fund initial training and stabilizing efforts for a consumer after placement in an employment setting.

2. The funding of long term follow up by state and local, public and private agencies (i.e. the agencies currently expending funds for adult day centers, pre-employment training or sheltered work stations).

Cooperative efforts between agencies can help redistribute funds from low outcome services to high outcome services, a major goal of the supported employment initiative *(Hill, Hill, Wehman, Revell, Dickerson & Noble, 1987).*

In Missouri, services (beyond 9 months or support needed by a job coach for 25% of the workers time, whichever comes first) must be planned prior to the beginning of actual supported employment rehabilitation funded by the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It is the responsibility of the service provider to document that commitment for ongoing support exists upon the termination of VR funds prior to VR developing an IWRP for a client with a goal of supported employment. The commitment should be in writing and placed in the individual's file. *(Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1989).*

Q. What role does the vocational rehabilitation counselor play in supported employment?

A. The vocational rehabilitation counselor's primary responsibility is selecting clients suitable for supported employment, arranging for assessment by an SESP, setting up the IWRP meeting, monitoring the placement at a SESP agency, authorizing a review of client progress when appropriate and monitoring the quality of service.

Q. What can a local school district administration do to implement a supported work program at the secondary level?

A. Local school district administration can support a program to prepare students for supported work by developing the philosophical basis, creating the funding mechanisms and developing district regulations needed to implement a supported

work training program. The district must be committed to the philosophy of providing students with disabilities an opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to become productive workers within integrated work environments within their community. To put this philosophy into action, the district must find the resources to implement a community supported employment training program. To begin, new staff must be hired or current staff reassigned to perform the duties of a job coach. A job coach performs numerous duties to set up job sites and provide on site student training and supervision. District administrators also need to develop district policies which address the transportation and liability issues relating to off-campus programs.

Q. What role does the job coach/employment training specialist play in supported employment?

A. A job coach is hired by the local school district or a supported employment service provider to provide a multitude of services. Job coaching is multi-faceted because of the many people, systems, problems and duties which the job coach must address on a daily basis *(Fadely, 1987). Cohen, Patton, and Melia (1986)* delineated nine competencies of a job coach:

1. knowledge of the job requirements of employees with disabling conditions,
2. understanding of employers' job requirements,
3. ability to train effectively,
4. interpersonal skills (for example, good communication skills),
5. knowledge of task analysis,
6. knowledge of behavior management techniques,
7. understanding of industry procedures,
8. knowledge of work/personnel adjustment skills, and
9. understanding of the relationship between programmatic needs and severity of disability.

Q. What types of training best prepares a person to be a job coach?

A. A job coach is usually required to have at least a bachelor's degree in one of the following areas or a related field: rehabilitation counseling, special education, vocational education for students with disabilities, vocational evaluation or counseling of people with disabilities. Some supported work programs, however, find it effective to have a degreed person supervise a team of job coaches who are paraprofessionals Work experience with people with disabilities in a school, rehabilitation center or evaluation unit is very valuable for a job coach. An effective job coach also is able to manage extensive paperwork, has strong beliefs in the rights of people with disabilities to work in the community with nondisabled workers and probably most importantly is flexible to the changes which occur on the job site.

Q. What is the process of developing and maintaining community based training sites?

A. *Stainbeck, Nietupski & Hamre-Nietupski (1986)* suggest a seven step process which school districts must follow carefully and systematically to plan and establish community training stations. These steps are:

1. DEVELOP PROGRAM GOALS AND RATIONALE to outline desired outcomes for students and why these outcomes are desired. This information will be used to convince employers to participate in the program and to help avoid problems once training has been established.

2. COMPILE POTENTIAL TRAINING STATION LISTING by becoming familiar with the community's existing employment options and key contact persons within local business establishments.

3. CONTACT EMPLOYERS AND ESTABLISH TRAINING SITES in businesses in which the school staff has an acquaintance who can act as a contact person. The contact person can solicit support from the employer prior to school staff contacting the employer by phone to describe the program and set up a meeting for further discussion of program participation. A face-to-face meeting with the potential employer provides school district personnel the opportunity to make an in depth presentation of the program and "sell" it. If an employer is reluctant to be involved, school personnel must seek creative solutions to the perceived obstacles to program participation. If the employer decides to participate, the next step is to complete an agreement that specifies the respective responsibilities of the school and the employer.

4. DETERMINE TRAINING STATION SKILL DEMANDS by making a careful inventory of the work environment to identify the work and ancillary skills required for successful performance. Observation at the job site can determine the specific work skill demands, working conditions unique to the business (e.g., noise level, coworker proximity, physical layout) and ancillary skills (e.g., communication, breakroom and transportation skills, use of the restroom and other self care skills such as dress requirements).

5. PLACE AND TRAIN STUDENTS. It is important to closely match the student(s) with the job requirements of the particular site. Effective training procedures including task analysis, chaining techniques, shaping, cue redundancy, prompt hierarchies and contingency management techniques need to be applied to facilitate vocational skill acquisition, fluency, maintenance and generalization. Keeping close contact and frequent communication with the supervisors and the teachers data on student job acquisition and rate of work, supervisors evaluation of student progress and supervisors input on ways to

improve the program are all important in developing employer "ownership" of the program.

6. TRANSFER SUPERVISION TO NONSCHOOL STAFF by reducing the amount of school personnel supervision and shift control to business establishment personnel. This can be very difficult but can be successful if the teacher (job coach) first gradually thins the reinforcement schedule to reduce the student's dependence on school staff as sources of reinforcement. School staff must also model the skills necessary to manage the student to help the work supervisor learn to deal with the student. Also a co-worker advocate must be recruited who will be provided the necessary information and skills to assist a student when a problem arises and to provide a social contact at the work site.

7. MAINTAIN AND EXPAND TRAINING STATIONS with a positive working relationship between the school district and the business establishment. To maintain a training site, school staff must continuously provide the employers feedback regarding the success of the program and seek their input. Successful job site managers may be helpful in recruiting new sites in the community. School districts should reinforce the businesses for their participation and interest in the program with appreciation banquets, newspaper and television features about the program and ongoing patronage of the business.

Q. **What should a job training contract include?**

A. The job training agreement outlines the responsibilities of both the school and the employer. Two samples are Attachment A included in this module.

Q. **Once community training begins what kinds of assessment can be obtained about a student?**

A. While providing community vocational training there is much information that can be gained about the student's interests and abilities. Some questions that can be answered include:

1. **How long does it take the student to acquire the job skills?** The fact that a student learns a job quickly may be an indication that the student will learn other jobs quickly as well. The easy acquisition of job skills may also indicate the student's interest in the job.
2. **After the student has learned the job tasks, how is the student's work production?** Data regarding the student's work production is very valuable information to give to a future employer. Work production may also be an indication of the student's interest in the job.
3. **How does the student do with work related behaviors (i.e., attention to task,**

response to criticism, social skills on the job)? Many times the student has more difficulty learning the skills which require making a judgment or interacting with other people. These skills deserve as much attention to plan and teach as the job specific skills.

4. **Through the student's behavior and work performance what jobs are of interest to the student?** It is important for a secondary program to provide the student with a variety of vocational training experiences. These experiences will help the student choose the type of job they like to do. Students can express their job preferences and interests through an interview or picture sort process. If school staff can determine the student's job interests while in a secondary program, this information will assist in future supported work placements.
5. **What is the student's learning style and what teaching strategies are the most effective with the student?** Community vocational training is an excellent opportunity to determine how the student learns and what types of training situations most closely correspond to the student's learning style. Does the student like group situations or working alone? Does the student work better in a quiet environment than in a noisy one?
6. **What is the student's strength and endurance?** Community vocational training can provide information about the student's physical tolerance and work stamina. Through various work experiences students can also learn whether they enjoy a physically demanding job or a more sedentary one.

Q. **What other skills should be taught to prepare a student for supported employment?**

A. To help prepare students for supported employment for graduation, secondary teachers must also teach other skills needed for the various adult roles the student will assume after graduation. These adult roles include homemaker, neighbor, community member, consumer and friend. To plan a functional curriculum the teacher must identify the activities and skills needed by adults in the home community. After these skills and activities have been identified, the teacher can then plan teaching activities in the natural environments or simulate the natural setting by using natural materials and teaching the activities during the naturally occurring times. Academics, independent living (domestic), communication, community involvement, community mobility and recreation/leisure are all skills which, if taught during secondary school, will help prepare the student for supported employment.

Q. **What should be done to facilitate the transition from school to supported employment?**

A. An appropriate adult outcome of supported employment will not magically happen for a student. Another responsibility of school personnel is to be involved in transition planning for students with disabilities. School personnel must establish

relationships with adult service agencies in the community and state and local funding agency staff (i.e., the Department of Mental Health, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Social Security Administration, etc.). Interagency cooperative efforts can help school staff understand the role these agencies play in funding and providing services. Members of the interagency committee can also be valuable members of the team that plans for the student's transition from school to supported work. Committee members can determine the service goals for the student and determine which members will be responsible for implementation of the service goals. Only through careful planning and persistent communication can the transition from school to supported work be smooth and without gaps in services for the student

Q. **What other Missouri LINC modules can provide information on topics related to supported employment?**

A. There are several Missouri LINC modules which relate to the topic of supported employment. These include:

*Assessing Employer Needs
*Assessment and Support Services for Special Needs Students
*Behavior Management of Students with Special Needs
*Functional Curriculum
*Independent Living Skills, Functional Curriculum Materials
*Transition

SAMPLE CONTRACT FOR JOB SKILLS TRAINING WITH EMPLOYERS

1. The major purpose of the job skills training program is to provide students with opportunities to acquire job skills in "real" job environments.
2. The students will be supervised by school employees unless otherwise specified and agreed upon by the employer.
3. The students will not be financially compensated for their work during training, unless otherwise specified and agreed upon by the employer.
4. Liability and insurance for the students and school employees during training is the responsibility of the school district, not the employer.
5. The employer will provide the necessary materials or complete the job requirements. School employees might adapt materials or develop new materials to facilitate a student's involvement. Adaptations to employers' materials must be approved by the employer.

The following have agreed to the conditions stated in this contract:

1. _____ _____
   Employer Date
2. _____ _____
   Parent Date
3. _____ _____
   Student Date
4. _____ _____
   Teacher/trainer Date
5. _____ _____
   School administrator Date

Source: Falvey, M. (1986). Community based curriculum: Instructional strategies for students with severe handicaps. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

CONTRACT

CAMDENTON R-III DISTRICT WORK STUDY PROGRAM

The major purpose of the Camdenton R-III District Work Study Program is to provide students with opportunities to acquire job skills in "real" job environments.

Contract agreements are as follow:

1. Students shall be supervised by school employees until otherwise specified and agreed upon by both the employer and school personnel, who shall determine when job skills development has proceeded to the student independently performing the job.

2. Students shall be financially compensated for their work during training by the employer unless otherwise specified and agreed upon by the school/employer_____ _____.

3. The school is responsible for providing bus transportation to part-time job training sites during the school day. At the time employment becomes permanent and/or full-time, transportation responsibilities transition to the student or parents.

4. The employer's Workers' Compensation Plan shall provide insurance coverage on-the-job.

5. The employer shall provide standard materials for the job. School employees may adapt or develop new materials to facilitate student job performance. Adaptations to employer's materials must be approved by the employer.

6. The school is responsible for providing a job coach who shall serve as liason between the school and employer for the resolution of any problems which may arise. The job coach is responsible for job training, analysis, shadowing and evaluation.

7. If a student needs to be absent from the job and/or school, it shall be the student's and/or parents' responsibility to notify school personnel and the employer.

8. The student's work schedule shall be consistent with the school calendar. If school is not in session due to scheduled holiday or inclement weather, the student will not participate in the Work Study Program unless otherwise stipulated.

_____

_____

9. The student and/or parents shall not file for unemployment compensation from the Division of Employment Security until the student is working independently and no longer participating in the Camdenton R-III District Work Study Program.

10. Employers will have the right to terminate employment after fair consideration and consultation with the job coach. A student may not independently make the decision to terminate his/her employment until a conference is held with appropriate school staff.

11. Before an employment site can be adjusted or terminated, the student, along with the IEP-team and parents, must meet to determine change of placement.

The following persons have agreed to the conditions stated in this contract:

_____ Employer	_____ Date
_____ Parent	_____ Date
_____ Student	_____ Date
_____ Teacher/Trainer	_____ Date
_____ School Administrator	_____ Date
_____ On-Site Supervisor	_____ Date
_____ Vocational Rehabilitation Representative	_____ Date

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